

VZCZCXRO6349

RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN
RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHROV #0065 2491459
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 051459Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0976
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 1010

UNCLAS VATICAN 000065

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC MOVEMENT WARY OF EUROPEAN HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE

REF: VATICAN 26 AND 28

¶1. Summary: A panel discussion on justice and human rights -- which included a presentation by Ambassador Glendon -- and conversations with members of the Catholic lay movement indicate that an important segment of European Catholics are wary of some of the continent's institutions' and governments' promotion of a human rights discourse that runs counter to Catholic Church teachings. In their view, this trend ignores European traditional values and betrays the true essence of human rights. End summary.

¶2. (U) On August 27 Ambassador Glendon participated in a panel discussion on "Justice and Human Rights," part of the annual weeklong cultural festival run by the Catholic lay movement "Communion and Liberation" since 1982 in Rimini. Pol Chief attended several other festival events from August 24 to 27 and discussed human rights with members of the movement. (Note: see reftels for background information about Communion and Liberation and other Catholic lay movements. End note).

¶3. (U) Joining Ambassador Glendon on the panel were Joseph Weiler, law professor at New York University; Marta Cartabia, law professor at the State University of Milan in Bicocca; and Father Stefano Alberto, theology professor at the Catholic University of Milan.

¶4. (U) Ambassador Glendon discussed Pope Benedict XVI's speech from the UN General Assembly in May, in which he upheld human rights against modern political and philosophical currents undermining them. Professor Weiler noted that while the vast majority of European citizens are not victims of human rights violations, virtually all Europeans list human rights as one of their highest political values. This, he maintained, shows that the concept of human rights is ingrained in Europe's political identity, informed by its history and Judeo-Christian tradition. For Weiler, when governmental agencies assume sole responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights, citizens are relegated to the role of passive observer. Professor Cartabia criticized European institutions that, under the guise of promoting human rights, aim to legitimize abortion, euthanasia, and same sex marriage.

¶5. (U) The panelists underlined the need to promote and protect fundamental rights, and to denounce the characterization of subjective preferences as inalienable human rights. Such characterizations, they agreed, would distort and trivialize the meaning of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Informed by Catholic social doctrine and the teachings of the Church, European Catholics --such as the thousands that every year attend the Rimini meeting-- have been strong advocates of human rights. Among the Rimini audience, however, there was a sense that certain European governments and institutions (such as the Zapatero administration in Spain and the Council of Europe) are promoting the view that abortion, euthanasia and same sex-marriages are human rights. Such a view, Communion and Liberation members believe, instrumentalizes human rights and betrays their true essence.

17. (SBU) To the extent that European institutions and governments use the language of human rights to advocate legislation that runs counter to Catholic social doctrine and Church teachings, they risk alienating a significant part of the continent's traditional human rights constituency. Under this scenario, European Catholics committed to the teachings of the Church are likely to be suspicious of, rather than embrace, European governments' and institutions' calls to promote human rights at home and abroad. End comment.

GLENDON